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PROCESS OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY, WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF THE ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

Letter dated 16 April 1992 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission

I have the honour to refer to the report of the Commission on Disarmament's provisional agenda for the 1992 substantive session which has been circulated as document A/CN.10/L.30 dated 30 January 1992. With specific reference to items No. 5 and 6 of the agenda I wish to bring to your attention a number of developments in South Africa both in regard to nuclear weapons and in regard to disarmament in general.

The South African Government deposited its Instrument of Accession to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (N.P.T.) on 10 July 1991 in Washington D.C. The relative domestic legislation was reviewed and new regulations promulgated in terms of the Armaments and Development Act (No. 57 of 1968) on 30 August 1991 through a notice published in the South African Government Gazette.

The text of Government Gazette Notice No. R 2122 of 30 August 1991 clearly underlines South Africa's commitment to its obligations. The full text reads as follows:

SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE FORCE

No. R 2122 30 August 1991

ARMAMENTS DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION, IMPORT, TRANSIT, EXPORT AND MARKETING CONTROL

I, Magnus Andre de Merindol Malan, in my capacity of Minister of Defence, acting by virtue of the powers vested in me by section 4C of the Armaments Development and Production Act, 1968, (Act No. 57 of 1968), do hereby proscribe the following in regard to the prohibition on the development, manufacturing, import, transit, export and marketing of armaments:

With effect from the date of the publication of this notice no nuclear explosive devices or spare parts which can be used for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices as purported in Article II of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons shall be developed or manufactured in the Republic or transported through the Republic from any place outside the Republic to any such other place or exported from the Republic or marketed inside or outside the Republic, and no attempt shall be made to develop or manufacture such goods inside the Republic or to transport such goods through the Republic or to export such goods or to market such goods inside or outside the Republic.

Further to the above step, the South African Government signed a Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency on 16 September 1991. The Agreement entered into force the same day. Under the Safeguards Agreement South Africa was required to submit an initial report to the IAEA listing all the nuclear material in nuclear activities within the country, and did so, as confirmed by the IAEA in its press report No. 1196 of 8 November 1991.

I had the honour to advise the Secretary-General of my Government's accession in a letter dated 11 July 1991 (subsequently distributed as General Assembly document A/46/302 of 15 July 1991 under item 58 of the preliminary list); and of the subsequent developments in a letter dated 11 November 1991 (subsequently distributed as General Assembly document A/C.1/46/18 of 12 November 1991 under agenda item 58).

The initial report submitted by South Africa was reviewed by the Agency, and was followed by an IAEA visit to South Africa to verify it in accordance with its normal practice. IAEA negotiation teams have visited South Africa in regard to conventional nuclear facilities and also in regard to South Africa's enrichment facilities, and negotiations conducted to put in place the detailed subsidiary arrangements required by the Safeguards Agreement. In addition to this the Agency has familiarized the South African authorities and functionaries with full-scope safeguards implementation through an orientation seminar.

The IAEA is currently examining data provided by South Africa and will in due course produce a report. On receipt of the report South Africa will take further steps if necessary to comply with IAEA requirements under the Safeguards Agreement, in line with its commitments.

The South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. R. F. Botha, has repeatedly over the past few years expressed South Africa's support for the establishment of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in Africa. South Africa has been encouraged by the accession to the N.P.T. of other African countries, especially the recent accession of several in southern Africa, which opens the door to such a goal, if not immediately for the whole of Africa, at least initially in the southern African region. South Africa's accession to the N.P.T., signing of the Safeguards Agreement and the subsequent steps taken should be interpreted as a positive disposition towards such a development.

Further to the above, South Africa has embarked on bilateral discussions with various of its neighbours. Earlier this month a delegation from Kenya visited the South African Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC) at its headquarters at Pelindaba for an exchange of views. Subjects discussed included the fields of nuclear medicine, technology and the use of atomic energy in agriculture.

South Africa believes that it has a role to play in the development of nuclear technology, particularly on the African continent and is interested in exchanging nuclear technologies with other countries, especially in Africa. To this end it hopes to become a member of AFRA, the African section of the IAEA.

I would appreciate it if this letter could be circulated as an official document of the Disarmament Commission.

(Signed) R. W. STEWARD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative